

Transcription of sundry book reviews by David Lambourne in *Lincolnshire Past and Present Vols. 103, 104 and 107*, (Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 2016/17)



## Boston, Lincolnshire

Historic North Sea port and market town



**MINNIS, John and CARMICHAEL, Katie, with FLETCHER, Clive and ANDERSON, Mary, *Boston, Lincolnshire – Historic North Sea port and market town*, Historic England, 2015. 128 pages. ISBN 978 1 84802 270 6. £14-99 pbk. (eBook £6-99)**

Historic England is in the process of producing its *Informed Conservation* series which aims to highlight the special character of some of the country's most important historic areas and the development pressures they are facing. The series is intended to raise awareness and interest among a non-specialist audience as well as provide a useful resource for heritage professionals. *Boston Lincolnshire* is the first of this series to reach publication.

Boston was, of course, of great importance in medieval England and the building of its magnificent 14<sup>th</sup> Century parish church with its 272 feet lantern tower, the tallest of any English parish church, is an eloquent statement of this. St Botolph's, affectionately known as the Stump, still dominates the town.

Yet, as the two main writers of this publication, John Minnis and Katie Carmichael, so ably demonstrate, there is more to Boston's heritage than its church. The authors have produced an impressive and comprehensive account of the key architectural features of a large number of buildings of significance or interest in the town as well as historical background information on many of them. This historical content is often remarkable and can only have been provided through the extensive knowledge of our Society's chairman, Neil Wright, to whom the authors have expressed their great indebtedness in their Acknowledgements.

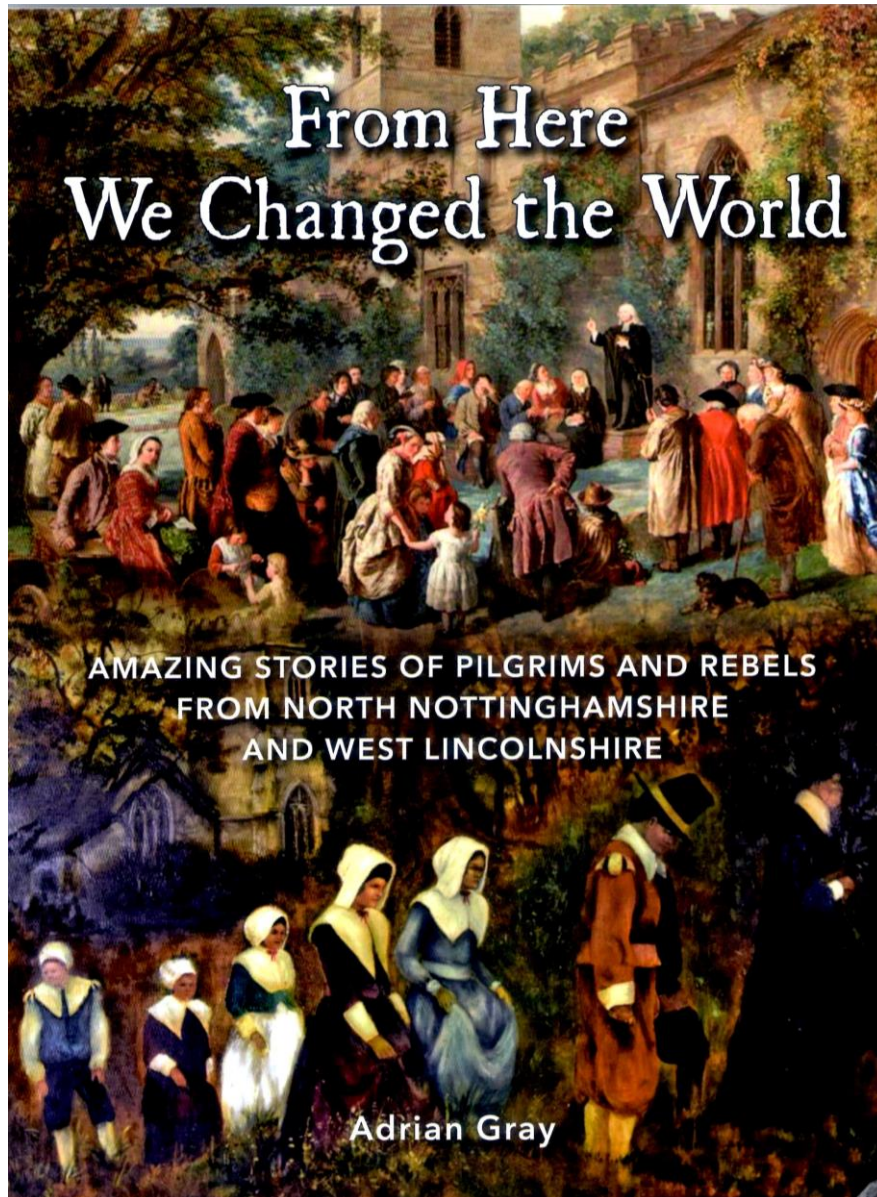
The authors have devoted the first chapter to the early history and development of Boston and made reference to extant examples, including St Mary's Guildhall, the remains of the Dominican friary, Shodfriars Hall and a number of buildings in High Street, whilst in the next four chapters, they have examined the rich and varied surviving, as well as some of the lost, architecture, sometimes built in distinctive Boston styles, of the last three centuries.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the historic core of Boston and those who choose to walk around this area using this book as their companion will surely benefit from the very clear Market Place walk and South Street and South Place walk illustrations which are to be found at the end of the book.

The closing chapter, written by Clive Fletcher and Mary Anderson, relates to the successes of the near past and the challenges the town now faces. It concludes that there is 'a new vitality and confidence detectable in Boston' with its fascinating heritage being 'increasingly seen as a key to its future'. It draws positive conclusions from, amongst other things, the recent rejuvenation of the historic Market Place, the rescue of the substantial early 18<sup>th</sup> Century house in the High Street which once served as Boston's first bank, the installation of the modern bowstring footbridge and even the benefits of European migration, so often regarded as a problem. It offers the tantalising possibility of a future for the town 'firmly established on the mainstream tourist map of England, with an economy not only resilient, but again prosperous due to its historic and continuing relationship with the water and the land, and for its unique character'.

This is an attractive and very readable publication with many excellent photographs and illustrations. It is positive in tone and does not dwell too long on that which has been lost, particularly through development in the 1970s. The publishers' desire to raise awareness and interest in this historic town will surely be achieved, with both general and specialist readers being amply rewarded for their efforts.

David Lambourne, Boston



**GRAY, Adrian, *From Here We Changed the World*, Bookworm of Retford, 2016. 144 pages. ISBN 978 0 9927857 3 4. £12-99 pbk.**

The author has written more than twenty books and is historical adviser to both the Pilgrims & Prophets and Bassetlaw Christian Heritage groups. In this publication he sets out his claim that the relatively small rural area of north Nottinghamshire and north-west Lincolnshire has had a huge impact on the development of Christianity in England, America and across the world.

His first sixteen pages are devoted mainly to a general summary of the evolution of Protestantism and non-conformity in the area, and includes references to prominent individuals such as Anne Askew, Richard Clyfton, John Smyth, William Brewster, John Wesley, William Booth and even Thomas Cranmer, the first protestant

Archbishop of Canterbury. It also deals with religious movements, including the Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers and later the Methodists and Salvationists, together with some of the notable families that helped make the developments possible, like the St Pauls and the Wrays.

The remainder of the book is in the form of a directory of more than seventy settlements in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire associated with these developments and it comes as no surprise that, as far as our county is concerned, the greatest attention is given to Epworth and Gainsborough.

Much of the section on Epworth is naturally devoted to the Wesleys, and we find that John Wesley preached in the town around seventy times. Yet Epworth was also the birthplace of two significant Puritans, Richard Bernard and Thomas Granger, and the place where Alexander Kilham was converted to Methodism. Kilham went on to become an active Methodist, but was expelled from the Methodist Conference in 1796 and was thereafter responsible for setting up the New Connection in 1798.

Gainsborough became the home of a Separatist 'Pilgrim' congregation with John Smyth as its 'pastor'. It was also a town where dissent and non-conformity thrived for several centuries, with Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists, Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists all being influential and successful.

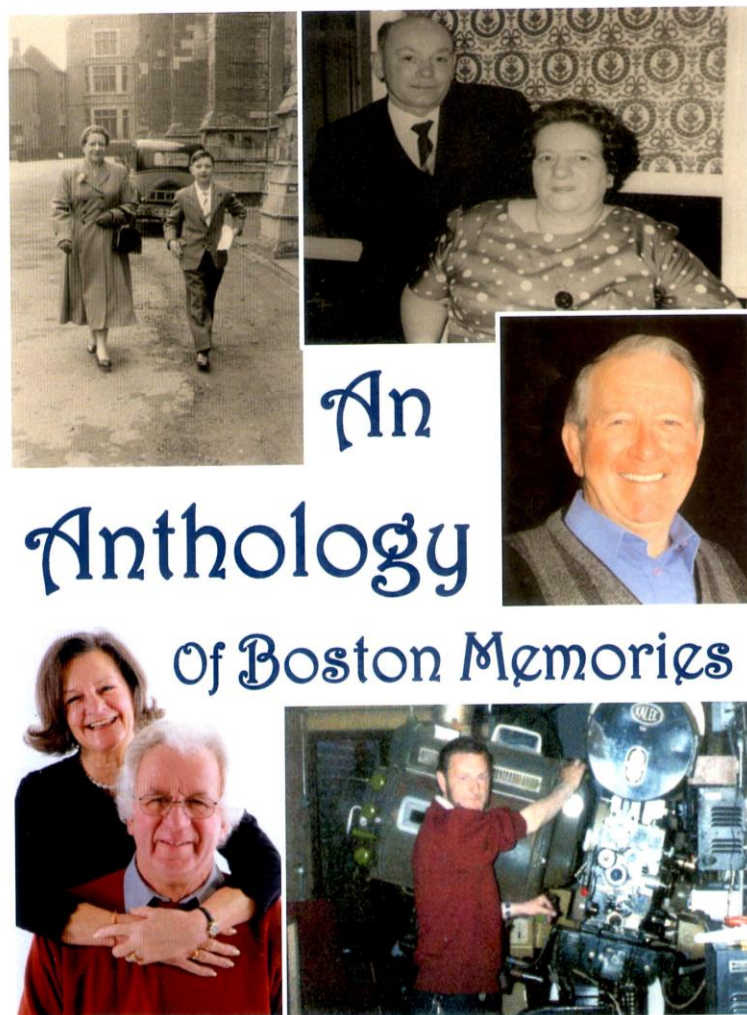
In some respects, it is a pity that the author's study only encompasses the western part of our county. There are many other settlements in Lincolnshire associated with the developments to which he refers, including Stallingborough, the supposed birthplace of Anne Askew, Raithby, where Robert Carr Brackenbury's chapel is still to be seen and, of course, Boston, with its connections with the Pilgrim Fathers and the Puritan John Cotton, and where Catherine Mumford, the co-founder of the Salvation Army, spent much of her childhood.

The work is nicely presented in a readable style with an abundance of appropriate and interesting black and white photographs and other illustrations. The front cover contains two remarkable colour images. The first is of a painting of John Wesley preaching from his father's tomb in Epworth, the original of which has been restored in recent years and now hangs in Boston's Guildhall, while the second is of a painting of Puritans returning from Babworth church, which is apparently the work of an inmate at nearby Ranby prison. Babworth is often referred to as the spiritual home of the Mayflower Pilgrims and their original pastor Richard Clyfton, who was rector there from 1586 until his removal in 1605 when he became pastor to the Separatist congregation at Scrooby.

This publication should appeal both to those with a general interest in the history of Lincolnshire and those with a specific interest in the key individuals and places involved in the various dissenting and non-conformist movements from the Puritan era to the present day.

David Lambourne, Boston





**SHINN, Helen S (editor), *An Anthology of Boston Memories*, Boston Old Times Publishing, 2016. 176 pages. No ISBN. £20-00 hbk. (Available from Boston Old Times Publishing, 1 Silver Court, Boston, PE21 6JR)**

The editor has done much to help sustain an interest in the history of Boston, and many locals enjoy her bi-monthly periodical, 'The Boston Old Times', as well as visits to her local history bookshop behind Pescod Square. Her avowed aim is 'to celebrate the history and heritage of our town and to preserve in print those recollections and photographs that risk disappearing'.

The present publication is an anthology of the recollections of five men from the Boston area, all of whom are able to look back over long lives, together with a sixth, Thomas Fairweather, who was born in 1911 and passed away in 2009, whose handwritten account it seems was the inspiration for this collection. Each of their stories are interesting in their own right but, more specifically, in what they reveal about many changes to life in Boston and around. Your reviewer has lived in the town a mere thirteen years but has witnessed many developments. How much more can be revealed by those whose memories span seventy years or more!

The editor has produced extracts from Thomas Fairweather's record, and his son, Gerald, is also a contributor to the anthology. The stories of these two men, just a generation apart, provide an interesting contrast, with the younger man even having enjoyed the opportunity to spend each of his school summer holidays away from Boston in Newcastle.

Unsurprisingly in a rural county such as Lincolnshire, several of the contributors have a background in agriculture and describe the traditional farming methods of yesteryear. There is much for readers to enjoy, and for some even to relate to, including Alan Tosney's description of his upbringing in a farm cottage without electricity or any indoor sanitation and of one of the highlights of the year, the Methodist Sunday School outing on horse drawn farm carts. Readers may also enjoy Geoffrey Dunham's account of working in the old Boots store in Boston Market Place and his reference to how he was demobbed from National Service just in time to travel to Derby to witness Boston United beating Derby County in the FA Cup. Surely a truly memorable event!

Another contributor, John Almond, achieved a measure of national success through his involvement with cycling. He won a National Road Race Championship in one of the veteran categories as well as the National Penny Farthing Championship on three occasions. It is interesting to read that during the Boston May Fair the showmen would go to the garage where John worked as a mechanic for fuel for their petrol powered rides and pay in sixpences and shillings! The cash was not counted but weighed!

The final contributor, Maurice (Mo) Brader, is well-known locally through his role as a cinema projectionist and the talks he has given about his work. We read that he even contrived to spend much of his National Service operating the camp cinema after his Commanding Officer had found out about his earlier job in the Odeon projectionist room. This was discovered after he had been put on a charge for carving his name in the sentry box while on guard duty!

This publication, which is nicely presented with ample black and white photographs to illustrate, is a limited edition. A paperback version is due this spring. Hopefully a sequel may follow, which perhaps this time might include the recollections of some women as well as men.

David Lambourne, Boston